BRITISH COLUMBIA

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highlights

a weekly digest of recently released British Columbia statistics

Labour Market

- **Employment in British Columbia increased more than a fifth (22.6%) between December 1989 and the same month last year**. The employment growth was twice the national average (+10.8%). Alberta (+20.6%) was the only other province with similarly strong job growth during this period. *Source: SC, Catalogue 71-005-XPB*

- **The number of British Columbians receiving regular employment insurance (EI) benefits decreased 1.9% (seasonally adjusted), to 68,150, between October and November.** Since the beginning of the decade, the number of EI recipients in the province has shrunk 50%, largely as a result of tighter eligibility requirements. British Columbians represent just under 13% of all EI recipients–roughly the same as the province's population share.

  Nationally, the number of EI recipients was down 2.1% in November, falling to 539,720. Alberta (+2.7%) and Yukon (+0.7%) were the only regions with increases. In Saskatchewan, the number was unchanged at 12,730, but in all other parts of the country, fewer people received EI in November than in the previous month.

  Source: Statistics Canada

- **Average weekly earnings of British Columbians edged up 0.2% between October and November, rising to $622 (seasonally adjusted).** BC workers continue to be among the most highly-paid Canadians. The national average was $608, and Ontario ($646) was the only province with higher average weekly earnings. The two territories, where workers are paid premium wages to compensate for higher living expenses and the fact that they often live and work in remote areas, had the highest average earnings in the country ($666 per week in Yukon, and $729 in NWT). *Source: Statistics Canada*

Mining

- **The value of coal produced by BC mines declined 10.9%, to $987 million, in 1998, as the province's coal production dropped from 27.8 to 25.0 million metric tonnes.** BC accounts for just over a third (34%) of Canadian coal production by volume, and more than half (55%) of the value of coal produced in the country. Canadian coal production dropped 5.5%, to 74.4 million tonnes, and the value of coal production was down 6.6%, to $1.8 billion.

  In Alberta, the country's largest coal-producing province, coal production decreased 4.0%, to 34.9 million tonnes. Nova Scotia (-17.9%, to 2.2 million tonnes) also produced less coal in 1998 than in the previous year. Both of the other coal-producing provinces increased their production last year: Saskatchewan's output rose 3.3% (to 12.0 million tonnes) and in New Brunswick, coal production was almost two-thirds higher (+64.7%, to 0.3 million tonnes) than in 1997. *Source: SC, The Daily*

Prices

- **Canada's industrial product price index (IPPI) edged down 0.1% in 1998.** US prices for manufactured goods fell 1.1% during the same period.

  In Canada, the most significant annual price decreases were for refined petroleum and coal (-17.4%), wood (-5.4%) and primary metal (-5.0%) products. Producer prices were down 10.0% for domestic softwood lumber, and 12.7% for exported softwood lumber. The steepest overall price decline was for softwood lumber

Report **Working hours for the self-employed**

Did you know...

Teenagers spend less time watching TV (averaging 14.3 hours a week in BC) than any other age group. Those most likely to be glued to their TV sets are women aged 60 and over, who watched an average 32.7 hours of TV in 1997.

from the interior of BC (-15.0%). Prices for softwood lumber from coastal forests were 10.1% lower than in 1997.The transportation equipment (+7.2%), paper and allied products (+3.6%), and printing and publishing (+3.5%) industries recorded the largest price increases during 1998.

Source: Statistics Canada

- **The effect of the US/Canadian exchange rate on prices quoted in US dollars proved to be a moderating influence, offsetting large declines in prices received for some commodities.** Excluding the exchange rate effect, the Canadian IPPI would have been down 2.1% for the year, instead of posting only a 0.1% decline. The transportation equipment, paper and allied products, and wood products industries benefited the most from this effect. Export contracts for these goods are frequently based on US dollar values. The US dollar increased from an average of $1.38 Canadian in 1997 to $1.48 last year.

Source: Statistics Canada

Television Viewing

- **BC residents surveyed in the fall of 1997 indicated that they spent an average of 20.4 hours each week watching television programs, 1.6 hours less than at the beginning of the decade.** TV viewing time in BC was lower than in any other province except Alberta (19.8 hours).

  French-speaking Quebecers were the most avid TV-viewers in the country, spending an average of 26.5 hours a week in front of the tube. Residents of New Brunswick (24.5), Newfoundland (24.3) and Nova Scotia (24.1) also used up the equivalent of one day out of every week watching TV. Viewing times were lowest in Alberta (19.8), BC (20.4) and Manitoba (21.0). The Canadian average was 22.7 hours.

  Source: SC, The Daily

- **Foreign television programs are more popular in BC than in other parts of the country.** In 1997, British Columbians spent less than a third (31%) of their time watching made-in Canada programs. This compares to a national average of 40%. British Columbians were also more likely than the average Canadian (32%, compared to 21%) to tune in to foreign TV stations.

  However, Canadian news and public affairs programs are more popular with BC viewers (they accounted for 16.6% of TV viewing time in 1997) than foreign programs (6.3%). In all other categories except sports (where Canadian programs have 7.7% of the market, compared to 3.1% for foreign programs) and music and dance (0.7%, compared to 0.6%), British Columbians are more likely to watch foreign programs than domestically produced ones.

  More than a quarter (27.5%) of the TV viewing time of British Columbians is spent watching drama, with news and public affairs a close second at 22.9%. Comedy (13.4%), sports (10.9%), and variety and game shows (8.5%) are also popular choices. *Source: SC, Catalogue 87F0006XPE*

The Nation

- **The Canadian economy grew 0.4% (seasonally adjusted) in November, marking the fourth consecutive monthly increase in real GDP after a mid-year downturn caused by labour disputes.** Despite the resurgence, economic growth for the year is expected to fall short of the economy's strong performance in 1997. During the first 11 months of 1998, GDP grew 2.8%, compared to a 4.0% increase observed in the same period of 1997.

  For the first time since August, the goods sector provided most of the impetus for economic growth. Goods-producing industries expanded 0.7%, led by the manufacturing sector, where output increased 1.1%. The service sector continued its steady growth (+0.3%), marking the sixth straight month of expansion. The top performers were the communications (+1.0%) and retail trade (+1.0%) industries. Wholesale trade (+0.4%), government services (+0.4%), accommodation and food (+0.4%), and real estate and insurance agencies (+0.2%) posted more moderate gains. *Source: Statistics Canada*

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For data originating from Statistics Canada: data sourced to 'Statistics Canada' has been retrieved from CANSIM, the agency's electronic database; otherwise the source is identified as 'SC' plus the publication name or catalogue number.

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Infoline Report:

The long and the short of working hours for the self-employed

Contact: George Dufour / (250) 387-0376

Originally published in Third Quarter 1998 issue, *Small Business Quarterly*. Annual subscription: $60 + GST

Note:
Observations on the self-employed in this report are based on what people did at their main job. They do not take account of work done at second or third jobs. In 1997, there were an estimated 379 thousand British Columbians self-employed in their main or only jobs, and 1,459 thousand people working as employees.

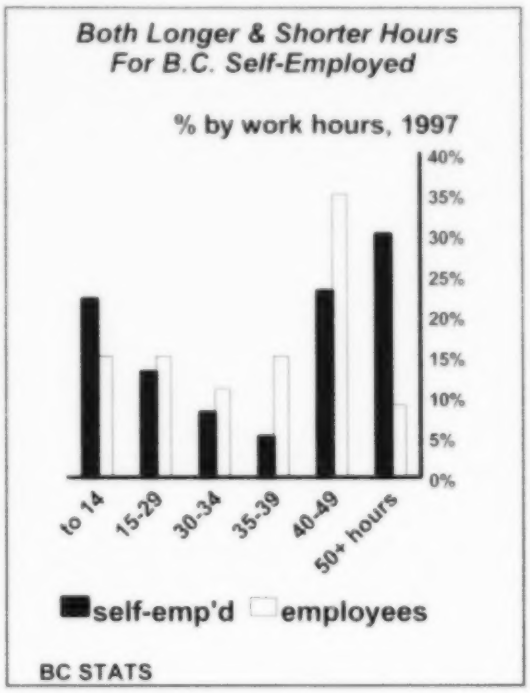
It will come as no surprise to anyone that self-employed people generally toil longer hours at their businesses than wage earners or salary workers work at their jobs. The average work week for self-employed people in British Columbia during 1997 was 39 hours, compared to 35 hours for employees.

But these averages include some people working part-time hours, and others working very long hours. Compared to employees, self-employed workers tend to work either very long or very short hours, with relatively fewer working the more or less standard 40 hour work week. When average weekly hours are calculated for all self-employed workers, the very long hours worked by some tend to be balanced off by the very short hours worked by others.

A better picture of the working hours of self-employed people is presented by comparing the percentages of self-employed people working various weekly hours, with the percentages of the employee workforce working those same hours.

Long Hours For Some, Short Hours For Others

Thirty per cent of self-employed people in British Columbia worked exceptionally long hours (over 49 hours per week) in 1997. This compared to only 9 per cent for employees. Self-employed people working these long hours doubtless included many of the stereotypical entrepreneur type - energetic, persistent, and prepared to devote most of their waking hours to nurturing their businesses.



But other self-employed people evidently had very different approaches to their work, and allotted different priorities for their time. These included the 22 per cent of the self-employed in British Columbia working less than 15 hours per week in 1997. Included among these were semi-retired people, operating small businesses partly as a hobby or to supplement pension or investment income. Others were students, housewives or house husbands who chose self-employment for its flexibility; because it allowed them to fit in work around school or family responsibilities.

Part-time workers, whether self-employed or engaged as employees, have become a much more important part of the British Columbia workforce during the 1990s. In 1990 they

amounted to only 18 per cent of all workers. By 1997, they had grown to account for 21 per cent.

Most people working shorter hours do so by choice. Seventy-two per cent of all British Columbia part-time workers in 1997 had voluntarily chosen shorter hours. This was usually because part-time work allowed them to devote more time to other aspects of their life. Shorter and more flexible working hours drew many voluntarily into self-employed work on a part-time basis.

The portion of British Columbia self-employed workers who worked less than 30 hours per week increased from 30 per cent of all self-employed in 1990, to 34 per cent in 1997. Over the same years, the number of self-employed working more than 49 hours per week shrank from 32 per cent of the total to 30 per cent.

These trends have been stronger in British Columbia than elsewhere in Canada, giving self-employment in the province a distinct profile. British Columbia has relatively fewer self-employed people working long hours than in anywhere else in Canada; and more self-employed working short hours than in most other provinces.

Fifty-three thousand (42 per cent) of the 125 thousand net increase in British Columbia self-employment during the 1990s, have been people working less than 30 hours per week. Another 15 thousand (12 per cent) have been working only 30 to 34 hours per week. Self-employed people working in the 30 to 34 hour range have been the fastest growing group of workers in any 'hours of work' category, including both self-employed workers and employees. Between 1990 and 1997, their numbers almost doubled, growing from 16 thousand to 31 thousand.

More Women Entrepreneurs Prefer Shorter Hours

The need to fit work around family responsibilities has made female entrepreneurs more likely to work short hours than their male

counterparts. Twenty-one per cent of British Columbia women working less than 30 hours per week reported 'caring for children' as their principal reason for choosing shorter hours. Another 8 per cent reported other personal or family responsibilities as the principal reason. Almost no men reported child minding as the main reason for working part-time, and only 3 per cent reported other family or personal reasons.

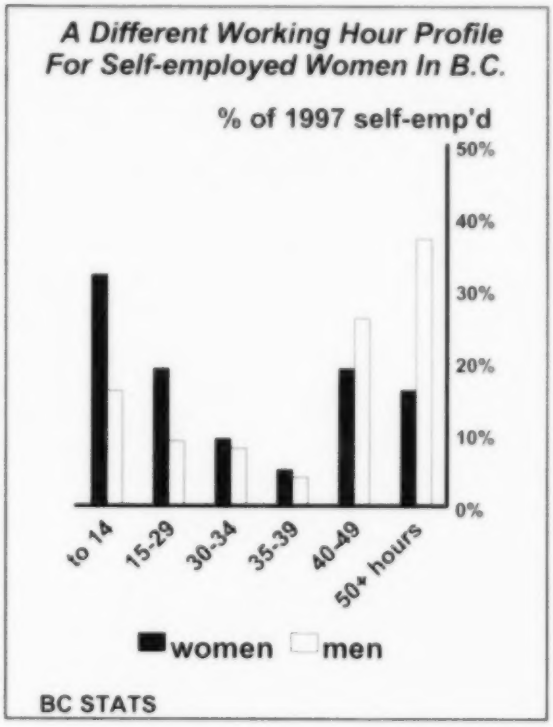
These differences explain why only 16 per cent of self-employed women in British Columbia worked more than a 49 hour week in 1997, and 51 per cent worked less than a 30 hour week. By comparison, 37 per cent of self-employed men worked more than 49 hours per week, and only 25 per cent worked less than 30 hours per week.

Although self-employed women in British Columbia were much less likely to be working exceptionally long hours than self-employed men, they were still far more likely to be working those long hours than women employees. The

16 per cent of self-employed women working more than 49 hours weekly compared with only 5 per cent of women employees working those hours.

Some Occupations Call For Longer Hours Than Others

Transport equipment operators report some of the longest hours worked by any self-employed workers. These include, for example, independent taxi operators and long distance truck drivers. British Columbia self-employed workers in this category worked an average 49 hour week in 1997. Forty-nine per cent of them worked over 49 hours per week, and another 14 per cent worked an average week of 41 to 49 hours. They were more than twice as likely to be working in excess of 49 hours per week than employees in the same occupational group.



Exceptionally long working hours were also common for self-employed workers in medical and health fields. Thirty-seven per cent of all self-employed people in these occupations worked more than 49 hours per week in 1997, while only 3 per cent of employees worked those hours. Almost half (48 per cent) of all self-employed medical and health workers worked more than the standard 40 hour work week. This compared to 10 per cent of employee workers.

The 74 thousand self-employed British Columbia sales people in 1997 were another group putting in exceptionally long hours. Among these were individuals employed as part-time agents for home sales distribution networks along with a wide variety of commissioned sales people. Thirty-four per cent of self-employed sales persons worked more than 49 hours per week, compared to 8 per cent of salaried sales people. Eighteen per cent of self-employed salespeople worked 14 hours or less per week.

The infamously long hours worked by many people operating their own restaurants, motels or bed and breakfast facilities were reflected in the very large proportion of self-employed people putting in long workweeks in the accommodation and food services industry. Over half (53 per cent) of self-employed people in this industry worked more than 49 hours per week, and another 10 per cent put in between 41 and 49 hours per week. Self-employed people in this industry were ten times more likely than employees to be working in excess of 49 hours per week.

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BC at a glance . . .

POPULATION (thousands)	Oct 1/98	% change on one year ago
BC	4,021.3	0.9
Canada	30,381.1	0.9
GDP and INCOME		% change on
(BC - at market prices)	1997	one year ago
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) *($ millions)*	109,347	3.3
GDP *($ 1992 millions)*	98,201	2.2
GDP *($ 1992 per Capita)*	24,775	0.1
Personal Disposable Income *($ 1992 per Capita)*	16,340	-2.3
TRADE ($ millions)		
Manufacturing Shipments (seas. adj.) Nov	2,868	2.3
Merchandise Exports (raw) Nov	2,126	1.6
Retail Sales (seasonally adjusted) Nov	2,724	-3.0
CONSUMER PRICE INDEX		% change on
(all items - 1992=100)	Dec '98	one year ago
BC	109.7	0.3
Canada	108.7	1.0
LABOUR FORCE (thousands)		% change on
(seasonally adjusted)	Dec '98	one year ago
Labour Force - BC	2,062	2.6
Employed - BC	1,894	3.2
Unemployed - BC	169	-3.5
		Dec '97
Unemployment Rate - BC *(percent)*	8.2	8.7
Unemployment Rate - Canada *(percent)*	8.0	8.5
INTEREST RATES (percent)	Jan 27/99	Jan 28/98
Prime Business Rate	6.75	6.00
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	6.40	6.40
- 5 year	6.90	6.85
US/CANADA EXCHANGE RATE	Jan 27/99	Jan 28/98
(avg. noon spot rate) Cdn $	1.5207	1.4567
US $ *(reciprocal of above rate)*	0.6576	0.6865
AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS		% change on
(industrial aggregate - dollars)	Nov '98	one year ago
BC	622.69	1.8
Canada	606.40	1.1

SOURCES:

Population, Gross Domestic Product, Trade, Prices, Labour Force, Earnings } Statistics Canada

Interest Rates, Exchange Rates: Bank of Canada Weekly Financial Statistics

Released this week by BC STATS

- 1998 Business Indicators, January 1999
- Current Statistics, January 1999
- Exports, November 1998

Next week

- No subscription releases

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